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May 26, 2000



Office of Rule Making
The Rules Docket, AGC-10
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20591

FAA: 99-5926-556

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OFFICE OF THE
CHIEF COUNSEL
RULES DOCKET
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Dear Sirs,

RE: "Modification of the Dimensions of the Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP) Special Flight Rules Area (SFRA) and Flight Free Zones (FFZ); **Final Rule**. Docket No. FAA-99-5926, issued March 28, 2000.

EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association) is the world leader in recreational aviation. With an international membership of over 170,000, EAA brings together aviation enthusiasts, pilots and aircraft owners who are dedicated to the continued growth of aviation, the preservation of its history and a commitment to aviation's future. EAA programs, activities and events are known throughout the world for supporting aviation safety and promoting personal enjoyment and responsibility within an aviation lifestyle. These efforts are made possible through massive volunteer involvement in support of the organization, as well as EAA's special interest Divisions, and a global network of nearly 1,000 local Chapters and the affiliated National Association of Flight Instructors (NAFI).

The Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) requests modification of the southeast portion of the GCNP SFRA to enhance the ability of general aviation to safely by-pass the GCNP SFRA. The requested modification is in the best interest of public safety.

EAA agrees that the modifications made by this final rule are in the best interest of the GCNP, the FAA, Public Law 100-91, and the public flying in general aviation aircraft. However, EAA was the lead organization that fought to revise the changes to the southeastern section of the GCNP SFRA and we still disagree with the final rule in this area.

In the Proposed GCNP SFRA rule, the FAA moved the SE section of the SFRA to within 1 nm of the Sunny MOA. EAA contested this because it effectively created a roadblock in the sky for general aviation pilots who wanted to fly around the eastern side of the GCNP SFRA. In the final rule, the FAA agreed with our position and moved the SFRA back toward the west. The move, according to the FAA, would create a "3-½ nm corridor between the Sunny MOA and the GCNP SFRA." The corridor would "protect the confluence of the Little Colorado River and allow for safe general aviation aircraft transit through the area." The eastern southeastern portion of the GCNP SFRA now lies 4 nm from the actual boundary of the GCNP.

In the final rule, the FAA acknowledged that general aviation is not a significant part of the noise problem at the GCNP; general aviation is not a factor in disturbing the “natural quiet” of the GCNP; and general aviation overflights do not deposit litter in the GCNP. Therefore, EAA does not understand why general aviation aircraft should be restricted, by this final rule, to a VFR flight corridor that is only 3-½ nm wide. Especially when this corridor is more than 4 nm from the closest GCNP border.

In addition, EAA does not understand why the confluence of the Little Colorado River needs protection from “general aviation aircraft.” Public Law 100-91 requires the NPS to develop “actions necessary for the protection of resources in the Grand Canyon from adverse impacts associated with aircraft overflights.” Until this final rule action, there was nothing in Public Law 100-91 prohibiting general aviation aircraft from overflying public/private lands as long as they were complying with basic VFR flight rules (FAR 91.119) and the recommended minimum altitude (2,000 feet AGL) found in the Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM), paragraph 7-4-6b. Also, the confluence of the Little Colorado River extends under the “approved” corridor and into the Sunny MOA. Additionally, 98% of the Little Colorado River is not located within the boundaries of the GCNP.

FAA Order 7400.2D, Section 2, paragraph 7-21g, defines a **VFR flight route** as one “that parallels or follows rivers, coastlines, mountain passes, valleys, and similar types of **natural landmarks**, or major highways, railroads, powerlines, canals, and other **manmade objects**, or one that follows a specific radial of a **VOR or other navigational aid**. A review of the revised route shows that the only VFR flight route definition that would apply is the “specific VOR radial” (Tuba City VORTAC radial 231°). Yet the final rule placed the “specific VOR radial” into the GCNP SFRA and thus, making it unusable for VFR flight tracking.

Description of the relief sought:

EAA feels the relief sought is in the best public interest, would not impede public safety, nor impede the intent of Public Law 100-91.

1. EAA strongly suggests the FAA move the southeastern boundary of the GCNP SFRA northwest an additional two miles. Our recommendation would modify the boundary of the GCNP SFRA as “bounded by a line beginning at Lat. 35°55’12” N., Long. 112°04’05” W.; east to Lat. 35°55’30” N., Long. 111°52’30” W.; northeast to Lat. 36°01’50” N., Long. 111°36’06” W;” then north per the final rule. This change would place the “specific VOR radial”, Tuba City radial 231°, outside of the GCNP SFRA, making it usable for general aviation VFR flight tracking, and would not restrict nor impede the intent of Public Law 100-91.
2. EAA strongly suggests the FAA allow general aviation aircraft by-passing the GCNP to utilize victor airway V210 for VFR flight tracking at or above the upper limit of the Supai Sector (10,000 feet MSL). This change would allow “specific VOR radial” VFR flight tracking between the Grand Canyon VOR (radial 062°) and the Tuba City VORTAC (radial 243°) and would not restrict nor impede the intent of Public Law 100-91. The FAA proved that general aviation overflight is not a cause factor in the GCNP noise problem and therefore, because of this EAA feels this is a reasonable request.

3. EAA strongly suggests that the Grand Canyon VFR Aeronautical Chart (General Aviation side) be expanded to the southeast to show the true relationship between the GCNP, the GCNP SFRA, the Sunny MOA, and the established VFR general aviation corridor. Once this is accomplished, EAA strongly suggests the FAA establish a corridor centerline marking system very similar to the other GCNP SFRA corridors, including Lat./Long. coordinates at each end of the corridor. Since this area is completely void of normal VFR navigational aids, the marked corridor centerline would greatly aid general aviation pilots who use GPS for in-flight navigation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Earl Lawrence".

Earl Lawrence
Vice President
EAA Government and Industry Relations

Cc: Governor of Arizona
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AOPA
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